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ABSTRACT

This paper explores efforts of Mexico and the United States to obtain a significant return on their investment in postsecondary education. The authors establish a context for comparison between Mexico and the United States and discuss the challenges and central policy dilemmas that each country faces in implementing the policy tools of evaluation and incentive funding. Compared to the United States, Mexico's system of higher education is less developed both administratively and academically. Following a 20-year period of enormous growth and a decade of fiscal and political neglect, the Salinas administration initiated a strong proactive set of policies in the 1990s that were novel and in contrast to prevailing academic culture in Mexico. In the United States, while similar trends were experienced, these occurred in a large and decentralized system with much experience in institutional planning and evaluation and the changes occurred over a longer time period. The growth of performance assessment and conditional or incentive funding as policy instruments in both countries results from the use of these approaches as tools for government to direct or steer higher education. This paper explores how implementation has varied in the two countries and experiences and future directions for accountability and categorical funding mechanisms are explored. (Contains 14 references.) (JLS)

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ED 410 825

Understanding the Differences

A Working Paper Series on Higher Education in the U.S. and Mexico

Working Paper #1

Policy Approaches to Evaluation and Incentive Funding in U.S. and Mexican Higher Education

by
Peter T. Ewell
and
Rollin Kent

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Working Paper #1:

Policy Approaches to Evaluation and Incentive Funding in U.S. and Mexican Higher Education

by Peter T. Ewell and Rollin Kent

"Understanding the Differences"

A Working Paper Series on Higher Education in the U.S. and Mexico

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
P.O. Drawer P
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Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) is a public, interstate agency established to promote and to facilitate resource sharing, collaboration, and cooperative planning among the western states and their colleges and universities. Member and affiliate states include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

WICHE's broad objectives are to:

- Strengthen educational opportunities for students through expanded access to programs,
- Assist policymakers in dealing with higher education and human resource issues through research and analysis,
- Foster cooperative planning, especially that which targets the sharing of resources.

In 1993, WICHE, working in partnership with the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI) developed a binational project to facilitate educational interchange and the sharing of resources across the western region of the U.S. and with Mexico. This publication was developed as a resource for the project and as part of a series entitled "Understanding the Differences," created under the direction of WICHE's Special Projects and Research and Policy Analysis Units.

Funding for the working paper series was provided by The Ford Foundation. Other publications in the series include:

- Working Paper #2: *Higher Education Faculty in Mexico and the United States: Characteristics and Policy Issues* (Publication Number 2A262)
- Working Paper #3: *The Educational Systems of Mexico and the United States: Prospects for Reform and Collaboration* (Publication Number 2A263)
- Working Paper #4: *Higher Education's Responsiveness in Mexico and the United States to a New Economy and the Impacts of NAFTA* (Publication Number 2A264)
- Main comparative essay: *Understanding the Differences: An Essay on Higher Education in Mexico and the United States*—forthcoming, 1995. (Publication Number 2A265).

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Preface

A major obstacle to binational educational interchange across the U.S.-Mexican border is that educational policymakers and practitioners lack familiarity with the structures and issues of each other's educational systems. There are often assumptions on both sides that the two systems function similarly. To date, only limited information exists on educational policy issues affecting the United States and Mexico, particularly in a comparative context.

In an effort to fill that void, and with the encouragement of The Ford Foundation Director for Education and Culture, Alison Bernstein, and the Foundation's support, WICHE has developed a series of five reports, entitled *Understanding the Differences*. The series analyzes the major policy issues and differences in each country, so that meaningful discussions among higher education leaders and policymakers may occur toward the goal of developing new binational initiatives.

WICHE's *Understanding the Differences* series includes:

- Working Paper #1: *Policy Approaches to Evaluation and Incentive Funding in U.S. and Mexican Higher Education*, by Peter Ewell and Rollin Kent. This paper explores the growing desire shared by the two nations to obtain a significant "return on investment" in postsecondary education. The authors establish a context for comparison within Mexico and the United States and discuss the challenges and central policy dilemmas that each country faces as it attempts to implement the policy tools of evaluation and incentive funding. Past experiences and future directions for accountability and categorical funding mechanisms are explored.

- Working Paper #2: *Higher Education Faculty in Mexico and the United States: Characteristics and Policy Issues*, by Cheryl Lovell and Dolores Sánchez Soler. This paper describes and compares Mexican and U.S. faculty characteristics and conditions, including total number of faculty, student-teacher ratios, full- versus part-time status, rank, tenure, average salaries, gender and ethnicity, and union membership. Several contemporary policy issues are explored including faculty evaluation, workload and productivity, curriculum reform, faculty involvement with the business community, faculty development, and implications that NAFTA will have for faculty on both sides of the border. The paper concludes with some suggested areas for collaborative efforts of faculty in the two countries.

- Working Paper #3: *The Educational Systems of Mexico and the United States: Prospects for Reform and Collaboration*, by JoAnn Canales, Leticia Calzada Gómez and Néllyda Villanueva. This paper describes the sequential processes of education (from basic to higher education) in Mexico and the U.S. as a basis for understanding the relationships between the various levels of education. It analyzes the fragmented nature of the educational systems common to both countries and outlines possible solutions for integrating the different systems. Also included are brief overviews and examples of national, state and local collaborative relationships. The paper concludes with a discussion of ways to nurture and enhance binational collaborative relationships.

- Working Paper #4: *Higher Education's Responsiveness in Mexico and the United States to a New Economy and the Impacts of NAFTA*, by Elizabeth Santillanez. This paper discusses the critical role that higher education must play as the U.S., Mexican and Canadian markets become more integrated since the implementation of NAFTA. The paper gives an overview of

recent transformation of economic developments and business needs which require that higher education better prepare students to compete in the global workforce. It describes initiatives currently underway and gives recommendations for higher education policymakers to consider as they develop a workforce which is competitive and culturally-aware.

- The final comparative report: *Understanding the Differences: An Essay on Higher Education in Mexico and the United States*, by Judith I. Gill and Lilian Alvarez de Testa (forthcoming). The goal of this comparative report on higher education in Mexico and the United States is to provide an understanding of the major issues and differences in each country so that meaningful discussions may occur towards the development of new binational programs. While fully acknowledging the distinct contexts particular to each country, the report analyzes shared factors which contribute to the need for reform and change, including a perceived decline in educational quality; increasing enrollment demands; increased social, economic and cultural diversity within the workforce; rapid advances in technology; and increased and global economic competition.

WICHE hopes that this series will foster improved understanding of significant higher education issues in both countries and, over time, lead to new cooperative efforts to increase education opportunities in both nations.

WICHE thanks Alison Bernstein and Norm Collins of The Ford Foundation for their generous support of the general WICHE/AMPEI binational project, and for their recognition of the importance of United States-Mexico policy studies. We are also indebted to Judith I. Gill, former Program Director of WICHE's Research and Policy Analysis Unit, now serving as Associate Vice Chancellor for the Massachusetts Higher Education Coordinating Council. Gill identified the pertinent issues in binational education across our shared border, directed the research component of the project, and molded the information into a highly useful comparative context. Thanks also go to Sylvia Ortega Salazar, president of AMPEI, and Lilian Alvarez de Testa of UNAM who offered important insights in reviewing the papers.

WICHE acknowledges the binational teams of authors: Peter Ewell and Rollin Kent; Cheryl Lovell and Dolores Sánchez Soler; JoAnn Canales, Leticia Calzada Gómez and Néllyda Villanueva; and, Elizabeth Santillanez and her advisor, Paul Ganster. The authors eagerly worked through language barriers, cultural differences and logistical obstacles, in the spirit of true cross-border cooperation and exchange, which should characterize a project of this nature. We hope their cooperative efforts will inspire other researchers to pursue future binational collaborations.

Paula Palmer provided valuable editorial assistance as the papers were developed. Thanks also to WICHE staff members Robin Zúñiga (review of statistics); Debby Jang and Cherie Pederson (graphics support); Kelly Zweifel (library research); and Mary Ellen Keller (production). And finally, WICHE acknowledges Jere Mock for managing the project and her assistance in editing the series, and Margo Schultz for her many contributions including coordinating the communications with the authors and layout of the final manuscripts.

Richard W. Jonsen
Executive Director

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Boulder, Colorado (USA)
April 1995

List of Abbreviations

ACE	American Council on Education	Consejo Estadounidense para la Educación Superior
AFT	American Federation of Teachers	Federación Estadounidense de Profesores
ANUIES	National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education	Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior
AMPEI	Mexican Association for International Education	Asociación Mexicana para la Educación Internacional
CQAIE	Center for Quality Assurance in International Education	Centro para la Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación Internacional
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation	Organización para la Cooperación Económica del Asia-Pacifico
AAUP	American Association of University Professors	Asociación Estadounidense de Profesores Universitarias
CAPFCE	Federal Administrative Committee for the Construction of Schools	Comité Administrativo Federal para la Construcción de Escuelas
CETE	Educational Television Training Center	Centro de Entrenamiento en el uso de la Televisión Educativa
CIIES	Interinstitutional Committees for the Evaluation of Higher Education	Comites Interinstitucionales para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior
CINVESTAV	Center for Research and Advanced Studies	Centro de Investigación y Estudios Avanzados
COEPES	State Coordinating Committee for Higher Education Planning	Coordinación Estatal para la Planeación de la Educación Superior
CONACYT	National Council for Science and Technology	Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología
CONALEP	National College of Professional Technical Education	Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica
CONAEVA	National Commission for the Evaluation of Higher Education	Comisión Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación Superior
CONPES	Mexican National Coordinating Board for Higher Education Planning	Consejo Nacional para la Planeación de la Educación Superior
CORPES	Regional Coordinating Council for Higher Education Planning	Coordinación Regional para la Planeación de la Educación Superior
COSNET	Council for the National Sytem of Education Technology	Consejo del Sistema Nacional de Educación Tecnológica
CUPIA	Council of Public Universities and Similar Institutions	Consejo de Universidades Públicas e Instituciones Afines

ECS	Education Commission of the States	Comisión Educativa de los Estados
FIPSE	Funds for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education—U.S. Department of Education	Fondo para el Mejoramiento de la Educación Media Superior y Superior — Departamento de Educación de los Estados Unidos
FLACSO	Latin American School of Social Sciences	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
FOMES	Fund for Higher Education Modernization	Fondo para la Modernización de la Educación Superior
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade	Acuerdo General de Aranceles y Comercio
ICED	International Council for Educational Development	Consejo Internacional para el Desarrollo Educativo
IIE	Institute of International Education	Instituto para la Educación Internacional
IRSC	Institute for Regional Studies of the Californias	Instituto de Estudios Regionales de las Californias
ITESM	Monterrey Institute of Technology	Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey
NAFSA	Association of International Educators	Asociación de Educadores Internacionales
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement	Tratado de Libre Comercio de Norteamerica (TLC)
NCHEMS	National Center for Higher Education Management Systems	Centro Nacional de Sistemas Administrativos para la Educación Superior
NEA	National Education Association	Asociación Nacional de Educación
NSF	National Science Foundation	Fundación Nacional para la Ciencia
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	Organización para la Cooperación Económica y el Desarrollo
PROFMEX	Consortium for Research on Mexico	Consorcio para Investigación sobre México
PROIDES	Integral Program for the Development of Higher Education	Programa Integral para el Desarrollo de la Educación Superior
SEIS-ITESM	Satellite Interactive Education System-ITESM	Sistema Satelital de Educación Interactiva
SEP	Mexican Ministry of Education	Secretaría de Educación Pública
SESIC	Undersecretaryship of Higher Education and Scientific Research	Subsecretaría de Educación Superior e Investigación Científica
SHEEO	State Higher Education Executive Officers	Ejecutivos Estatales de Educación Superior

SINAPPES	National System for Long-term Planning in Higher Education	Sistema Nacional para la Planeación Permanente de la Educación Superior
SNI	National System of Researchers	Sistema Nacional de Investigadores
SNTE	Mexican National Teachers' Union	Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación
SPRE	State Postsecondary Review Entities	Comisiones Estatales de Evaluación de Instituciones de Educación Media Superior y Superior
SUPERA	National Program for the Advancement of Academic Personnel	Programa Nacional de Superación del Personal Académico
UABC	Autonomous University of Baja California	Universidad Autónoma de Baja California
UAM	Autonomous Metropolitan University	Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana
UANL	Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon	Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León
UNAM	National Autonomous University of Mexico	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
USDE (DOE)	United States Department of Education	Departamento de Educación de los Estados Unidos
USIA	United States Information Agency	Agencia de Información de los Estados Unidos
WCET	Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (at WICHE)	Cooperativa Occidental para la Telecomunicación Educativa
WICHE	Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education	Comisión Interestatal Occidental para la Educación Superior

Introduction

There appear to be growing concerns worldwide about societal "return on investment" in postsecondary education. Government policy in many nations increasingly emphasizes accountability, evaluation, and new forms of funding (Maassen and van Vught 1994). While the United States and Mexico have much in common at this level of generality, overt comparisons between nations can be both revealing and dangerous. Behind some clear instrumental policy commonalties are some marked and more basic differences.

Compared to the U.S., Mexico's system of higher education is less developed both administratively and academically. Following a twenty-year period of enormous growth and a decade of fiscal and political neglect, the Salinas administration (1988-94) initiated a strongly proactive set of policies in the 1990s which were novel, untried, and clearly at odds with contemporary academic culture in Mexico. While the U.S. experienced similar trends with respect to overall growth in the 1970s and increasingly proactive government policies from 1980 forward, these occurred on the base of a large and decentralized system with considerable accumulated experience in institutional planning and evaluation. Furthermore, policy changes in the U.S. took place over a far longer period of time.

While governments in both countries have recently become more proactive, their goals are somewhat different. In the U.S., the growing policy concern has been how to make a large, diverse, and highly consolidated system more efficient and more economically and socially relevant, while preserving current values of broad access and academic quality. In Mexico, the principal agenda is one of more basic development: how to restructure quickly to create a more viable, internationally competitive, high-quality system in the first place.

The growing prominence of performance assessment and conditional funding as policy instruments in the two countries may be explained by the fact that these are the primary tools that governments can use to "steer" higher education. As these policies are implemented, the outcomes in the two countries may also vary, given the differences in the histories and objectives of these policies.

This paper explores some of these points of comparison in the arenas of evaluation and incentive funding. This is not to suggest that these are the only policy initiatives being undertaken by the two governments. In Mexico, for instance, other contemporary government actions have centered on such matters as curricular reform and differential pay scales for the professorate, while in the U.S. many actions have addressed changing governance and finance agreements. The

present analysis, however, is limited to two specific policy tools: evaluation and incentive funding.

The Context for Comparison

To set a context for comparison, a number of observations at the broadest level can briefly be drawn:

- Both countries are experiencing a fundamental shift from a policy view of higher education as an element of "individual welfare" in which benefits to particular citizens and classes of citizens are stressed, to a view of higher education as a "social investment" serving collective, societal ends.
- In both countries there is widespread public criticism of the academy, but a general unwillingness to take on the task of making major structural changes in it.
- The current Mexican experience with accountability and incentive funding resembles U.S. practice of a decade ago: considerable institutional autonomy with respect to evaluation and relatively weakly directed funding incentives. In contrast, the U.S. now appears headed toward a more directive policy approach, partly due to fiscal difficulties and the perceived "failure" of earlier approaches.
- In contrast to the evolutionary and sequential U.S. approach, the Mexican government has simultaneously pursued two quite different lines of policy; one is non-directive with respect to general institutional self-assessment, while the other is rigorous and highly directive with respect to research and postgraduate study.
- In contrast to Mexico, most action in the U.S. has been at the state rather than the federal level, though there have been some recent and unprecedented federal accountability initiatives. Consequently, the U.S. experience is highly differentiated from state to state.
- In both countries there is a substantial dilemma of how to incorporate private higher education institutions into a wider accountability and policy structure; in Mexico the private sector is growing rapidly and entrepreneurially, while in the U.S. it is a stable conservative force.

These broad observations apply to quite different timelines in the two countries, with policy initiation and evolution occurring later and far more rapidly in Mexico than in the U.S.

For both nations, the decade of the 1970s was one of considerable expansion and relatively unregulated diversification. In Mexico, postsecondary enrollments grew over 250 percent in this period. This growth was fed both by demographic growth and by the government's political commitment to educational expansion. As in many other countries, the intense student unrest of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the simultaneous emergence of unionism in universities left their mark on higher education's relationship with the government. As the Mexican government's initial stance of outright confrontation gave way to negotiation, financial support for expansion in higher education became part of a strategy of reconciliation with disaffected youth and new political movements. In the U.S., absolute enrollment growth was more modest but there were unprecedented changes in enrollment structure due to an influx of non-traditional students previously underrepresented in higher education. This, too, had a political component in the commitment to equity and open access to public benefits resulting from the liberal agenda of the late 1960s.

In both countries, higher education funding followed growth and little else. Relatively few conditions were attached to funding allocations and thus institutions were able to pursue their own rather than societal ends. While institutional "autonomy" was highly valued in both settings, opportunities for self-direction on U.S. campuses were somewhat tempered by a planning and evaluation infrastructure that was stimulated by a regular (though relatively non-threatening) demand for evaluative information in voluntary and state-level academic program review.

The principal divergence in the two systems' experience came in the 1980s, due in part to substantial differences in economic conditions. In Mexico, this was a period of prolonged economic crisis, with negative growth rates, hyperinflation, capital flight overseas, and high unemployment. The result was a period of abandonment of higher education, as government was wholly preoccupied in its attempts to control the economy. In many U.S. states, in contrast, this was a period of considerable economic surplus, with the resulting ability to experiment relatively painlessly with new kinds of policies. Categorical and incentive-grant programs[1] were initiated, that added funds to adequately funded institutional base budgets to

[1] Categorical grants are funds given for specific purposes or in return for demonstrated performance; incentive grants are designed to induce institutions into particular behaviors by providing funding for specific kinds of programs.

achieve quantum improvements in "quality." At the same time assessments of performance were increasingly required of institutions in return (McGuinness 1994, Ewell 1994a). While not always conscious, the linkage between the two was clear: if institutions could demonstrate accountability on the basis of results, they might reasonably expect greater levels of funding and fewer conditions attached to the funding made available. By 1990, some 29 states required public colleges and universities to assess themselves regularly against their own goals, while all of the voluntary accreditation bodies (under moderate pressure from the federal government) had adopted similar requirements for both public and private institutions (Ewell 1990).

Results of these trends in the two countries during the 1980s were similar in some respects while different in others. In both countries, government policies (or the absence thereof) did little to affect internal academic cultures or the traditional autonomy of institutional operations: "quality" continued to be defined in terms of disciplinary excellence and largely in terms of "inputs" and "assets" (e.g., resources, student qualifications, faculty qualifications, physical plant, etc.) rather than "outcomes" (e.g., job placement of graduating students, performance on licensing exams, student evaluations, etc.) At the same time, however, U.S. higher education was able to log almost a decade of "practice" with assessment and directed funding mechanisms under relatively non-threatening circumstances, and adapt administrative capacities to handle them at both the state and institutional levels.

Beginning in 1989, similarities in policy orientation between the two countries can be observed, once again, but they occurred for very different reasons. In Mexico, economic recovery allowed the government to return its attention to social policy. As in many of the U.S. states in the 1980s, the chosen policy instrument was categorical rather than block-grant (unrestricted) funding (Kent 1993). At the same time, institutional self-evaluation and external peer review mechanisms — both novel in Mexico — were introduced under the auspices of a National Commission to provide an element of quality assurance. Similar to the U.S. policy approach of the 1980s, these measures were relatively modest in effect; they were not tied to funding, results were not made public, and institutions did their best to accommodate them as administrative routines (Kent 1994a). In both countries, this approach to policy in the main created an isolated and limited set of effects on institutions, generally unrelated to other policies.

But U.S. circumstances in the mid-1990s are far different from those of the previous decade. Sharp economic downturns in most states have produced several consecutive years of real decline in public funding for higher education, resulting in

substantial — though temporary — suspensions of incentive grant funding. At the same time, growing doubts about the policy efficacy of the institution-centered accountability and self-evaluation mechanisms of the 1980s have led to a far more proactive policy direction. At the state level, institution-centered assessment mandates have been supplemented in many instances by common statewide comparative performance indicators, including such quantitative measures as student-faculty ratio, minority representation, percentage of freshman and sophomore classes taught by faculty vs. graduate assistants, etc. (Ruppert 1994). As these are developed more fully, linked funding mechanisms have begun to follow, modeled increasingly on the notion of reward for performance. At the federal level, strongly proactive (and highly controversial) new policies have been adopted to regulate and rationalize the voluntary accreditation process. In addition, the U.S. Congress has created new state-based evaluative and enforcement bodies known as SPREs (State Postsecondary Review Entities) to review "deficient" institutions (Ewell 1994b). Both these mechanisms affected private as well as public institutions for the first time.

In Mexico, meanwhile, a second policy initiative, quite separate from the National Commission measures, resembles some aspects of the new U.S. policy direction, but it also contains features of the long-established U.S. approach to peer review of research and graduate training. Under the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT), which operates independently of the Undersecretary for Higher Education, research and postgraduate programs have been heavily supported under a rigorous and coherent evaluation scheme. The Mexican regulatory initiatives have touched the rapidly growing private sector at the graduate level — a novelty — although private undergraduate programs are not subject to government regulation.

In sum, the U.S. experience with assessment and directed funding appears considerably more spread-out than what has occurred in Mexico. This means that U.S. institutions have had more opportunities to become familiar with these new rules of the policy game. At the same time, most U.S. colleges and universities — especially in the public sector — began this period with a more highly developed administrative and informational infrastructure, and were thus potentially in a better position to respond. As a result, the two contexts are difficult to compare, as they in many ways reflect different stages and contexts for policy development. With respect to implementation and wider policy implications, however, many similar themes and dilemmas are apparent.

Some Implementation Themes

Despite differences in timing and setting, Mexico and the United States developed several common syndromes as they implemented new accountability and categorical funding mechanisms. These convergences are due partly to the technical similarities of all such policy tools. But they also appear to be due to some generalizable experiences about how higher education institutions, regardless of setting, attempt to accommodate external mandates for change.

Certainly, the institutional contexts in which these themes apply are sometimes vastly different. In Mexico in recent years, the main decision-making arena within the large autonomous universities has shifted from political "patron-client" (government-university) relationships to more bureaucratic settings in which rectors and their professional staffs exercise greater administrative authority. This "new look" resembles established U.S. patterns in most public universities, but without either the robust academic governance structures or sophisticated information systems often characteristic of U.S. institutions. In both countries, however, central administrations have significant latitude in maneuvering administrative or fiscal affairs, but exert relatively little authority over decentralized academic structures and practices. In both cases, therefore, government policies are generally strongly filtered and conditioned by local leadership and structural characteristics at the institutional level. On the one hand, institutional leaders will attempt to isolate and control external influences; on the other, they may attempt to harness them as bureaucratic weapons to stimulate changes in internal academic practice.

Among the specific implementation themes that appear to have arisen in both countries are the following:

Administrative Routinization. This phenomenon refers principally to the assignment of assessment and evaluation activities to "experts" rather than to faculty. This is often an aspect of a wider "compliance" mentality that attempts to protect the essence of the institution from external influences: evaluation thus appears as a "tax" on the enterprise that adds no value to the institution or its operations (Ewell 1991). This phenomenon has occurred widely in both Mexico and the U.S. Instructors and researchers in both countries complain, with some reason, that the amount of paperwork they must do has increased considerably without any real gain in their own academic effectiveness.

Uneven Development. This theme refers to the fact that some institutions take advantage of the opportunity granted by external incentives and accountability actions to help foster a process of internal restructuring and change, while others do not (or actively resist the process). Because of demands for "equitable treatment," government policy rarely is able to single out individual institutions, so governments may have to enforce sanctions against all institutions. Pre-existing inequalities among institutions with respect to internal planning and innovation capacities may be exacerbated through this process. This appears to have occurred in both countries. For example, a few institutions have actively harnessed the opportunities provided by developing internal mechanisms for reallocating funds to priority areas identified through the results of evaluation. In the U.S. this has been due largely to the actions of stable, powerful academic leaders who are in a position to effect internal change, while in Mexico it has occurred largely through outside intervention by governments or other powerful groups. In the majority of cases, institutions in both countries have learned to adapt by playing the government's game without undertaking substantive internal changes. Only in the U.S., however, has a visible response to such institutional resistance occurred: implementation by government of more proactive requirements in the form of more specific accountability measures and creation of the new, federally mandated State Postsecondary Review Entities (SPREs).

Participation and Clarity of Purpose. This phenomenon centers on the degree to which government is able to clearly communicate what it is trying to accomplish through policy, and the extent to which it consults with its academic constituencies and, as a result, modifies policy. In the U.S., the "first round" of accountability/incentive policy in the 1980s evolved slowly and often allowed opportunities for such consultation to occur (Ewell and Boyer 1988). The result in many states (notably Virginia, Colorado, and Washington) was gradual modification of policies based on better dialogue between the states and institutions. In Mexico, such communication has not been a notable trait of government policy in recent years. The result has largely been an attempt on the part of institutions to play back official language in order to gain additional funds, rather than trying to understand and facilitate what the government is trying to accomplish (Kent 1994b).

Deliberate Development and Passage of Time. A clear lesson learned from implementation activities in both countries is the need for policies to "settle out" and be developed over a reasonable time period, rather than precipitously. U.S. assessment practices in the 1980s developed slowly compared to the breakneck pace of development of performance indicator schemes and funding based on performance in the early 1990s; implementation of the first was relatively smooth

compared to the second, although changed economic conditions may have affected the situation as well. The latter pattern resembles the current situation in Mexico, where institutions have had relatively little time to react.

Some Central Policy Dilemmas

The experiences of Mexico and the U.S. also highlight similar policy dilemmas. Accountability and funding policies in both countries operate within a wider context of national (and state) politics, as well as a changing social climate for higher education. With regard to the former, political processes are increasingly contentious in both countries, and government's attempt to act as an agent of social change is more visible. With respect to the social climate for higher education, the stakes in both countries are higher, as postsecondary credentials are increasingly seen as individual entitlements and a necessary condition for economic survival.

Among the wider policy dilemmas raised by the experiences of both Mexico and the U.S. in the realm of accountability and incentive policy are the following:

Improvement vs. Accountability. This dilemma principally concerns evaluation, and refers to the central intent of government policy. Is policy intended to induce internal improvement at the institutional level, or is it intended to demonstrate to society that resources are being well spent? The former requires an institution-centered, self-evaluative approach with full involvement of faculty (Ewell 1985). The latter, typically, is far more directive and comparative, often embracing common measures and more rigorous evaluative procedures. Certainly, government may want to have it both ways; this was true for the U.S. in the assessment policies of the 1984-90 period, and for Mexico in the self-evaluation initiative undertaken in 1990 by the National Commission, under the auspices of the Undersecretary for Higher Education.[2] Or *two* processes may be required to accomplish these different ends, as illustrated by states in the U.S. currently adopting common quantitative performance indicators in addition to requiring institutional self-evaluation.

Strong vs. Weak Funding Mechanisms. The essential question here is the strength and "directedness" of incentive funding structures. Are the incentives clear and direct? How much influence or leverage do they have compared to other incentives present in the system, and are they based on inputs or results? In the U.S., such systems have evolved considerably since they were first established on a widespread basis in the early 1980s. In the 1982-89 period, most incentives were

[2] Since 1990, the accountability component was significantly weakened.

grant-like in nature, allowing institutions to present their best ideas for improvement largely within traditional concepts of academic quality. Since 1990, they have become considerably more directive and performance-based, either as implied "contracts" for specific services or results to be delivered, or as rewards for specific types of attainment or production. In Mexico, for the most part, the incentives for universities have remained vague as the connections between evaluation and funding are unclear. The principal exception is in science and technology, where CONACYT's policy of channeling funds directly to research and postgraduate is unambiguous (although controversial in some areas, such as the humanities and social sciences).

Centralization vs. Decentralization. This dilemma in essence concerns the "theory of change" embedded in government policy. Is desired change to be mandated top-down through central standards and directed incentives? Or is it rather to be built from within by administrators and faculty taking ownership for change, promoted indirectly by funds and data supplied by the government? In both countries, the predominant theory of change held by government has been that higher education institutions can be trusted to develop high standards of educational quality and financial efficiency on their own, if properly stimulated by a supportive set of external conditions. Nevertheless, in both countries there appears to be growing dissatisfaction with the results of more benign alternatives and both governments have recently embarked upon more directive alternatives (CONACYT in Mexico and the SPREs in the U.S.). The near-term prognosis in both countries, therefore, is for a more proactive government stance.

Academic vs. Societal Objectives. The central question here is: whose ends are to be achieved through evaluation or directed funding? With respect to evaluation, are institutions to be assessed against academic goals that they set for themselves, or rather against more broadly conceived societal objectives? With respect to funding, are grants given to institutions according to their own priorities to achieve "academic quality" or rather to help further an explicit social agenda (e.g. reducing illiteracy levels in urban areas)? In both countries, to date, societal objectives have been the object of official rhetoric, but academic objectives have predominated in the majority of actions taken. Evaluation has largely stressed the achievement of internal academic missions (albeit at greater efficiencies), rather than broad social objectives. Partly this is a result of successful institutional efforts to protect academic autonomy. But even more, perhaps, it is because government officials in both countries have so far been unable to agree on the specifics of these objectives and how higher education might be connected to them.

Closed vs. Open Processes. This policy dilemma is essentially the degree to which the mechanisms used to evaluate performance are open to public scrutiny and/or involve public or third party participation. In both countries, the predominant mode of operation has been the use of relatively closed processes, particularly with regard to the actual reports of peer reviews. In Mexico, the exception is CONACYT, which makes the basis on which judgments were made a matter of record, while in the U.S. the exception is similarly in the realm of peer reviews of federally sponsored research. In the U.S., however, pressure is growing to open up previously closed institutional accreditation procedures to public view and participation, and this trend is unlikely to be successfully resisted (National Policy Board 1994).

Input vs. Outcome Orientation. The principal question here is whether evaluations should be conducted primarily against input/resource criteria or against outcomes or results. The parallel question for incentives is whether they should be granted to institutions for investments consistent with goals, or only for the results actually achieved. In the U.S. since the 1980s the growing tendency for evaluation is to weigh outcomes heavily in the balance for discharging accountability — a considerable change over past practice. In funding, in contrast, performance-based alternatives are relatively rare; most directed funding is of a "contractual" 1993). In Mexico, the contrast is again apparent between the approaches of the National Evaluation Commission for Higher Education and CONACYT — the former being input/process-oriented with incentive funding linked to attempts to achieve stated goals, and the latter emphasizing the receipt of funds based on performance (Kent 1993).

Inclusion vs. Omission of the Private Sector. Until recently in both countries the private sector has been largely unaffected by government accountability policy. In the U.S., requirements for assessment initiated by voluntary accreditation organizations at the end of the 1980s exerted some indirect effects on private colleges and universities, but little else occurred. In Mexico, the private sector remains essentially unregulated despite burgeoning recent growth. In both countries, moreover, there is growing concern about large numbers of substandard institutions in the private (and in the U.S., the proprietary) sector. In the U.S., the federal government has acted directly to respond to this situation by creating the State Postsecondary Review Entities and intervening directly to alter the role and effectiveness of voluntary accreditation.

Taken together, the policy impact of these recent initiatives in both countries remains uncertain. In Mexico, as yet, nothing has occurred, but it is increasingly probable that government will take similar action to regulate the private sector in

the near future. In both countries, the rationale is likely to be citizen entitlement to participation and the consequent need for greater "consumer protection."

A Final Comment

In both countries, changes in basic policy direction are unlikely. In Mexico, the financial dislocation of late 1994 may force the new government to reduce funding for higher education. It is not clear, however, whether this will necessarily bring about a change in the basic policy orientation. In the upcoming process of policy definition within the new Zedillo administration, it is quite possible that accountability, centralization, strongly directed funding policies, open accountability processes, and an outcome orientation will present themselves with increasing vigor — unless growing political conflict in the context of the financial crisis makes it difficult to develop new policy programs. The programs that are in place, however, are not likely to be discontinued. In the U.S., similar trends toward directed funding and open, outcome-oriented accountability processes are part of a growing bipartisan agenda at the state and federal levels. Current federal accountability initiatives like "Student Right-to-Know" (which requires institutions to disclose graduation rates to prospective students), and the reform of accreditation began under the previous Republican administration. The "governors' coalition" which published an influential report that stimulated a new policy direction with respect to higher education accountability in the mid-1980s, also remains largely intact. As a result, both countries are likely to experiment further with more directed forms of resource allocation and put greater pressure on institutions to show results in the years to come.

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